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# THE DECORATOR AND FURNISHER.

## INTERIOR DECORATIONS.



NE of our correspondents in quest of new effects in interior decoration was passing Messrs. Ball & Co.'s decoration show rooms at 810 Broadway a few days ago, when curiosity led him to investigate the nature of the ornaments executed upon the walls and ceiling of the main apartment of the store, as an index of work done by the firm. He was agreeably surprised at the unexpected richness and variety of the work exhibited.

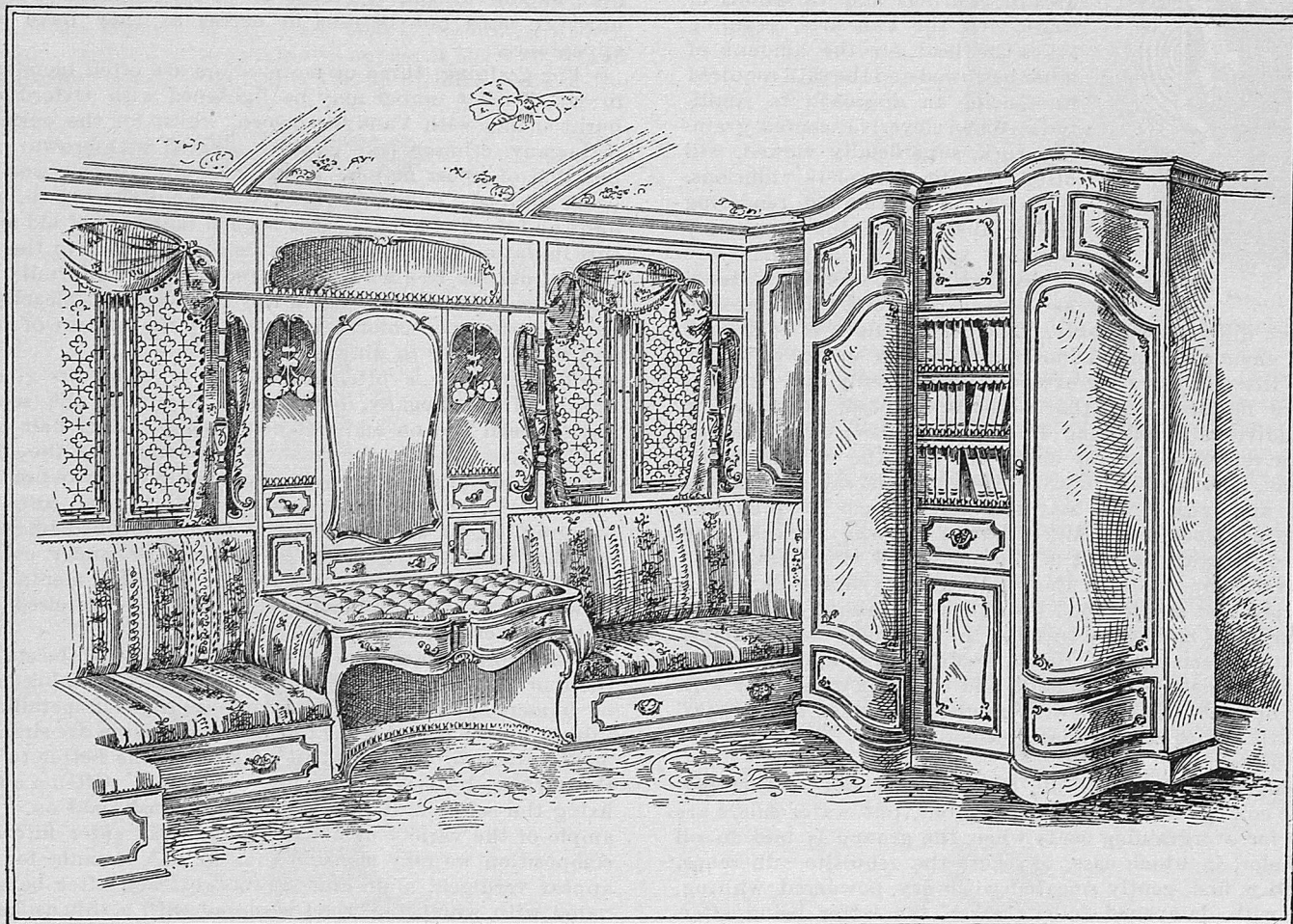
The wall to the right on entering the store has an immense frescoed panel containing a realistic representation of tropical plants in bright green foliage above which are sky effects, showing clouds and flying birds. The dado underneath the panel is a lincrusta pattern, having wide silver bands in relief, bearing at intervals heavily embossed copper seals on a gold ground. The frieze is also in lincrusta having a fine gold scroll on a silver ground. Another portion of the walls is treated with a modelled plastic composition, in which cherubs, branches of trees, foliage and birds are modelled in high relief, and afterwards skillfully decorated with colors and bronzes.

The ceiling is divided into three large panels, each about the size of the ceiling of an ordinary apartment. Each panel is a

Glen Falls, N. Y., and also at a large residence at Tarrytown, N. Y. We are also decorating one of the finest residences at Yonkers, that of Mrs. C. H. Butler, who has just vacated Boscobel, the late Henry Ward Beecher's place on the Hudson. The treatment of the interior of our homes is no longer subject to the caprice of fashion, but is guided by artistic consideration, that is influenced by the architectural features of the building, and a study of the practical requirement for each individual scheme of decoration. We make decoration a study, and thereby obtain a result that contributes both to comfort and repose, as well as the gratification of the most refined taste."

"Have you been long engaged in the decorative business?"

"Over twenty years," replied Mr. Ball. "This business was first established by Thomas Faye & Co., who began business in 1837. After a lengthy and honorable existence, the business came into our hands several years ago, and while mindful of the prestige of our predecessors, we infused a new life into the institution by reason of a larger and wider grasp of decorative art forced upon us, it is needless to say, by the growing demands of the public. You will admit that twenty years ago the condition of the wall paper trade for example, as compared with its present condition was somewhat feeble and restricted. People were then contented with the poorest of patterns, and a gilt paper on the wall was considered an unparalleled luxury. As to decoration in general, customers were contented with almost any suggestion offered them. They relied exclusively on the judgment of the decorator, and were naturally influenced by his presumed knowledge of his business. To-day all this is changed,



STATEROOM IN ROYAL MAIL STEAMSHIP ETRURIA.  
DECORATED BY GEO. GILBERT, OF LIVERPOOL, FROM DESIGNS BY TIMOTHY P. WOLF.

more or less elaborate arrangement of smaller panels in the form of octagons, diamonds, parallelograms and squares, all outlined with heavy gold mouldings. The borders and stiling of the panels are also outlined with mouldings, forming in themselves longitudinal panels. The field of the central panels is filled with plain ingrain paper, painted upon, each panel having a different subject in free hand fresco. Some have sky effects with birds and butterflies painted on blue ingrain. Others have roses or morning glories trailed on gray ingrain. The panels in the borders are filled with rich cuttings of flock, or embossed paper, painted or varnished in bright tints. The centre of each panel is worked in high plastic relief, with golden cupids and flowers decorated in gold bronze.

"How do you find the decorative business at present?" inquired our correspondent of Mr. Ball.

"Never better than at the present time," said that gentleman. "The demand for finer effects goes steadily on, and there is a more widespread demand for decoration in general. At the present moment we have a corps of decorators employed in the new house of Mr. Albert Tilt, at Lake Hopatcong, N. J. We have also men employed in the mansion of the Hon. Frank Byrne, at

and owing to the tremendous diffusion of artistic ideas of such art journals as the DECORATOR AND FURNISHER, and by the educational influence of public institutions, the customer has been incited to demand anything and everything in the way of beautifying the interior of his dwelling. Such is the force of competition amongst the decorators themselves, in endeavoring to supply this enormous demand for home art, that we are obliged to carry a large stock of the choicest European wall papers, as well as those of the best home manufacturers. We have in stock the finest productions of Paul Balin, Jules Desfossé, and F. Bezault, of Paris, and J. Zuber & Cie., of Rixheim. We also carry many notable specimens of Victorian papers, from the celebrated factories of Jeffrey & Co., W. Woolams & Co., Scott, Cuthbertson & Co., and Saunderson & Sons, of London. We supplement these productions by a judicious selection of the most advanced American wall papers, prominent among which are the specialties manufactured by Thomas Strahan & Co., of Chelsea, Mass., together with a full line of Lignomur, the new mural relief hanging made by this firm, of which specialty we are the sole New York agents. In addition to a well selected staff of assistants, who are thoroughly acquainted with every

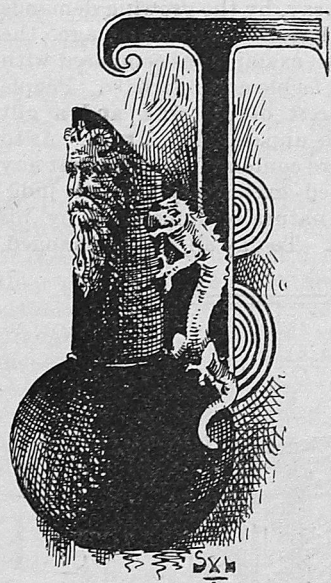


## THE DECORATOR AND FURNISHER.

necessary requisite for the execution of the most elaborate work, we keep employed a large corps of expert fresco painters, grainers, paper hangers, etc. Our business of late has increased so much, that, for the benefit of our up town customers, we will shortly open a branch at No. 489 Fifth Avenue, in the building formerly occupied by the Pottier & Stymus Manufacturing Co., where we will be prepared to submit designs and tender estimates for the completion of interior work of any description, both for public and private buildings.

### STAINING AND GRAINING OF FURNITURE WOODS AND INTERIOR WOODWORK.

BY JAMES CARUTHERS.



THE commercial supply of handsome hardwoods but partially meets the demand for furniture and decorative house woodwork; accordingly, in addition to the painting of soft woods, staining and graining come in as servicable substitutes. Staining simply presents the general color and effect of rich natural woods; graining depicts their special features in figurings and variations of tones. Of the two arts, graining takes the lead for the amount of labor bestowed and the skill required in securing an approach to similitude. When cleverly executed, graining work, superficially viewed, will often create complete illusions. Staining in addition to rendering the peculiar hue of the wood may be made to exhibit any markings of decided shades, such for instance as those of rosewood. Processes in

each branch differ considerably. The combinations of colors and the use of chemical agents as mordants, and in union with pigments are the result of long extended experiments, but there is no absolute uniformity in the methods adopted, stainers and grainers individually following different formulas. Of the woods selected for representation by either method, the chief are mahogany, oak, rosewood, walnut, bird's-eye maple, satin-wood, hair wood and amboyna. Not only soft woods such as pine and sycamore are stained and grained but in superior work a number of hardwoods on account of the fineness of their grain and their general color secure by their use a greater similitude. Thus cedar, walnut and maple wood are taken in graining for the representation of a mahogany surface; in staining, maple simply treated with a decoction of Brazil, assumes the appearance of the light red variety of mahogany, and chestnut wood dyed with saffron or old chestnut dyed with gamboge assumes the appearance of dark mahogany; similarly, ash darkened makes a good imitation of oak.

Graining may be done in oil, in spirit color and in distemper. Distemper color is seldom used throughout, but water colors are employed for overgraining coats when the ground is laid in oil or spirit color, in which case, to secure the requisite adherence, the ground is first gently smeared with dry powdered whiting, or coated with dampened fuller's earth, the latter being afterwards removed. For the forming of designs such as hearts and featherings, and what is known as the flower of the wood, the index finger and thumb, covered with a chamois leather or a piece of wool or cotton, play an important part, as they allow of a delicacy of touch unapproachable by a tool. The tools used in graining include a variety of combs, of wood, gutta-percha, cork, horn, steel and leather, two or more of these being often applied in the same design to represent "timber growths;" the teeth being usually covered with a piece of cotton to soften the pressure on the over color and render the edges of the veins more vague. For first class work, growth marks must be closely studied in the natural wood; often they strike off at angles adapted to catch the light, and at these points the grainer reveals more fully the lighter ground, or in other woods. Other tools mostly consist of different descriptions of brushes of varied forms. There are stippling brushes, wide hog brushes usually drawn in the direction of the veins formed by the combing, the badger softening brush with which the knots and figures lightly touched up by the overgrainer are gone over; hog-hair mottlers with long hairs against which the fingers are pressed as the brush is drawn over the work, causing it to assume a variety of pleasing curves; small brushes for maple figures which consist of a number of small sable brushes mounted, comb-like, at a little distance from each other in a frame, and eye-dotters that produce the appearance of the eyes and heart of several hard-woods.

Knots are put in with the end of a hog's fitch by holding the handle between the thumb and finger and twisting it around, the knots being afterwards elaborated by a camel's hair pencil. A flat hog's hair brush is frequently used to put on the grain, the badger softener following, this being so manipulated as to make one edge of the grain soft and the other sharp when this conformation appears in the natural wood. The flower of the wood, represented by removing some portions of the graining color, is usually executed with a veining fitch.

It is an absolute principle in graining, whatever the wood and the character of the figures, to avoid harsh contrasts, which are never formed in nature. Much of the result depends on the skill by which the blender, which softens the outlines and in a manner graduates the hues, is managed. With certain woods one side of a slab will be found coarser than another, but even this peculiarity is imitated by certain veining for the former. The semblance of pores of wood are effected by wavy motions of the comb. In reference to knots, it may be here stated that though frequently beautifully ornamental in themselves, they are avoided in the graining of furniture in which they would be regarded as defects. Sometimes in the markings the overgraining color is too wholly removed in order to give full effect to high lights by exposing the lighter ground. The colors used in overgraining are mixed with beeswax, soap, lime or whiting in order to give them such consistence as will prevent the markings of the comb running into each other. Any wax used is dissolved in linseed oil. Rapid drying is secured by the addition to the overgraining colors of a small proportion of litharge, sugar of lead, Japan varnish, or linseed oil or turpentine. These dryers, however, must not be used in excess as they have a dulling appearance.

For graining, three or more colors are often blended. Thus in oak, Turkey umber may be lightened with Oxford ochre, or burnt sienna with Vandyke brown, whilst for the enrichment of mahogany, crimson lake may be mingled with brown. The combination of colors may be contributed to by the wood that is being grained. Thus, redwood with Vandyke brown, applied in light and dark shades, affords a good imitation of old mahogany, this imitation in graining often being preferred to the redwood itself, from the frequent lack in redwood of uniformity of depth of hue, certain portions being apt to present a bleached appearance. Satin wood color is produced by the mixture of raw sienna and burnt umber in different proportions.

Top graining is often carried out in order to give a finer finish. In mahogany, for instance, graining, the second coat having been laid on and softened with a badger hair brush, the lights taken out and the feathery appearance of the hearts produced, a top graining may be given with Vandyke brown laid on with a flat hog hair brush combed into detached tufts. In this top graining, in which only portions are touched up with color, care has to be exercised not to disturb the under color. From this description of graining it will be seen that mental judgment as well as great manipulative skill has to be exercised from first to last for creditable work.

In staining so as to represent natural woods, the stainer takes these or graining work itself for patterns. Staining is effected by immersing woods in appropriate solutions in metallic vats and subjecting them to boiling; other preparations are simply rubbed on the wood to be stained in a hot state the better to penetrate the surface, by means of sponges or cloths. Often a mordant for fixing the colors is required to be previously laid on. As an example of the variety of elements that may enter into a staining composition we may mention that in one formula for rosewood appear verdigris, alum and logwood extract, after being impregnated with which the wood is glazed with a thin asphaltum and sandpapered and varnished.

When one portion of a piece of furniture is found to be lighter than the rest, darkeners are employed to bring it up, the stain being wiped off as soon as the desired depth of color is obtained. The chief darkeners are lime whitewash, bi chromate and permanganate of potash, vapor ammonia which is much used to match new with old wood, the carbonate for this purpose being dissolved in water or ammonia, nitric acid in water which gives a mahogany red or brown color to light colored woods and deepens the color of mahogany itself, lunar caustic, employed on dark woods, a decoction of walnut shells which acts well on ash and most light colored woods, deepens new oak from any shade from brown to almost black, and brings up sap walnut to harmonize with deeper colored black, green vitriol for turning oak from black to brown, and a decoction of tobacco stems prepared of any required depth or hue. All woodwork intended to be japanned, after being prepared with size and some coarse material mixed with it to fill up and harden the grain of the wood, is rubbed smooth with glass paper when dry.

Wood staining is generally effected before the wood is put in place. The business of staining is almost wholly in the hands of hardwood finishers. Graining, on the other hand, in the case of house woodwork, is carried out after the wood is in position, and in furniture after it has been completed and given a smooth surface.